

A Warrior's Secret

by NovelWhite

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Summary: Tensions between the Clans has not been too terrible since the Great Battle. However, when a WindClan warrior's body washes up on the shores of RiverClan, trouble starts to rise. It's up to Shellpaw's persistence to clear RiverClan's name. And along the way, he will discover a secret that's darker than shadows.

1. AllegiancesPrologue

Book Summary:****

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<p>ALLEGIANCES

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<p>RiverClan

Leader Shallowstar â€” jet black tom with yellow eyes

Deputy Fogpelt â€” dappled gray-and-white tabby tom

Apprentice, Shellpaw

Medicine Cat Downyfeather â€” shaggy, pale gray tom with blue eyes

Warriors (toms, and she-cats without kits)

Puddledusk â€” gray-blue tom with yellow eyes

>Apprentice, Nightpaw

Goldenpelt â€" golden-brown tabby tom

Flintface â€" dark gray tom with blue eyes
>Apprentice, Pebblepaw

Rowanpool â€" russet she-cat with yellow eyes
>Apprentice, Snailpaw

Brighteyes â€" brown-and-white she-cat with large, round eyes

Branchleg â€" long-legged golden tabby tom

Apprentices (over six moons old, in training to become warriors)

Shellpaw â€" mottled gray tom with blue eyes

Nightpaw â€" black tabby tom

Pebblepaw â€" speckled brown she-cat

Snailpaw â€" brown tabby tom with green eyes

Queens (she-cats expecting or nursing kits)

Dawnlight â€" golden-furred queen with blue eyes, mother to Flintface's kits (Featherkit and Sootkit)

Ashspeck â€" very dark gray coat, white paws and green eyes, mother to Icekit, Rainkit, and Ripplekit

Elders (retired queens and warriors)

Yarrownose â€" very old yellowish tom

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><p>WindClan

Leader Moorstar â€" brown-and-white she-cat with very short legs

Deputy Quailwing â€" dark brown tabby she-cat

Medicine Cat Littlepool â€" gray tabby she-cat with blue eyes

Warriors

Ryefur â€" golden-brown tom with green eyes
>Apprentice, Timberpaw â€" brown tabby tom

Warrenrunner â€" swift black-and-white tabby tom
>Apprentice, Lilypaw â€" _white-and-brown she-cat_

Foxwish â€" ginger she-cat with green eyes

Sparrow-wing â€" speckled brown tom with large white paws

Dustnose â€" thin gray tom

Pigeonfall â€" black tom with blue eyes

Elders

Scurryfoot â€" very old, dark gray tabby tom

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><p>ShadowClan

Leader Lichenstar â€" long-haired black tom

Deputy Barkfang â€" dark brown tabby tom with amber eyes

Medicine Cat Addersnap â€" large brown tabby tom with a thick, white tail

>Apprentice, Whiskerface â€" _black tom with dark green eyes_

Warriors

Twigtail â€" dark brown tom with a crooked tail and yellow eyes

Firwhisker â€" black-and-white tom with a white underbelly and tail-tip

Turtledawn â€" sleek tortoiseshell-and-black she-cat

Hollybranch â€" thick-furred black she-cat

>Apprentice, Ivypaw â€" _dark gray she-cat with a white underbelly_

Queens

Magnolia â€" pretty gray coat, former kittypet

Snowpetal â€" soft white coat and blue eyes

Elders

Pinetuft â€" pale brown tom

Quickfoot â€" once-fast gray tom, blue eyes

Peakfang â€" dark gray tom with a long tooth that sticks out of his lower jaw

Tallstem â€" long-limbed black-and-white she-cat with yellow eyes, oldest cat in ShadowClan

Pollenfur â€" golden-brown tabby she-cat

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><p>ThunderClan

Leader Willowstar â€" pale-furred tabby tom with green eyes

Deputy Littleberry â€" small black tom

Medicine Cat Finchfeather â€" gray tom with yellow eyes

Warriors

Tallpine â€" brown tom with long stripes

>Apprentice, Applepaw â€" _dappled brown tom_

Bugpelt â€" dark gray tom

>Apprentice, Goldenpaw â€" _golden tabby tom_

Snowmuzzle â€" pure white tom, blue eyes

>Apprentice, Chirppaw â€" _pale cream she-cat _

Hawkpelt â€" dark brown tabby tom

Queens

Minnowsplash â€" brown tabby she-cat

Sunnyfur â€" golden-tabby she-cat

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><p>Cats Outside the Clans

Midge â€" pretty gray kittypet

Edith â€" tiny, ginger-and-white she-cat who lives with Midge

Mouser â€" dark gray tom, lives in the barn

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><p>Other Animals

Moose â€" very large, black-and-brown dog

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><p>Prologue

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_Leaf-fall's end was here. What leaves _that were once colorful were now brown and crunchy. The air was chilly and crisp, freezing winds blowing through the forest. On RiverClan's side, frost had already started to form on the ends of the reeds and on top of the rocks.

The fish had left for warmer waters a half-moon ago, leaving the water cats to hunt for whatever creatures they could find in the forest. The lake was extremely cold, so nobody really wanted to dive deep to find prey that was hidden in the warm, lower regions.

A group of three warriors sat around the edge of the lake, their pelts pressed against one another for heat. The smallest of them was squished in the middle between a hefty black tom and a russet she-cat. The little cat's eyes flickered in interest as he stared at the lake, whiskers and tail twitching. "When will the lake freeze over?" he asked. "I want to play on the ice."

"In time. We have to wait for it to snow and then the ice will cover the water. It's quite fun to slide around until your pads ache." mewed the she-cat in response. "I remember when Shallowstar first stepped onto the ice. He fell and bumped his chin, then chased after me, Puddledusk, and Downyfeather when we teased him for it."

Shallowstar, the great black tom, glared at the warrior. "Rowanpool! I lost my concentration when you lot slid past me."

"I'm sure you did," said Rowanpool.

Just then, Shallowstar bristled his thick pelt and growled deep within his throat. The tabby apprentice whipped his head to the side, noticing something moving near the island where Gatherings were held. What could possibly be over there at this time? It wasn't time for a whole moon to pass just yet.

The strong odor of WindClan filled his nose.

"What's WindClan doing?" asked Rowanpool, alarmed. She stood up, along with Shallowstar, whose eyes were narrowed irritably.

"They're getting too close to our borders. Let's go." Shallowstar's tail swished, instructing Rowanpool and Snailpaw to follow. Together, they padded across the cold beach towards the swamp behind the island. Snailpaw's pads were starting to sting from the frigid sand.

Finally, they reached the edge of the territory. Snailpaw looked around the russet warrior to see that a group of WindClan cats were nosing around in the reeds. A long-bodied, short-legged she-cat was standing on a cluster of roots, meowing out commands to the others. Snailpaw had seen her before at the Gatherings; she was Moorstar, WindClan's current leader.

"Keep looking! We have to find Pigeonfall or he'll freeze to death!" she yowled.

Shallowstar walked a little ways out of the territory. His tail was lashing wildly. "Moorstar! What in the name of StarClan are you doing here?" he asked hotly.

Moorstar looked down at him from her post, green eyes dark. "One of our warriors has gone missing. The last place he was seen was the edge of WindClan's territory two nights ago. And now that it's getting colder, we have to find him before it's too late."

"We haven't seen your warrior," Rowanpool said calmly, "but I'm sure he'll show up eventually."

"You don't understand, Rowanpool. We can't lose another warrior before Leafbare."

A cold breeze swept in just then. Snailpaw shivered.

Shallowstar looked up at the sky where a cluster of gray clouds had started to form. Within them, fresh snow awaited their fall. The RiverClan leader allowed a sigh to pass his jaws, a puff of steam rolling off of his tongue.

"Go home, Moorstar. Tomorrow, I shall send a patrol out to help you search for Pigeonfall." he spoke. "We'll be able to cover more ground with more warriors."

WindClan's leader hopped down from the roots of the tree. She looked to her cats, then to the black tom. "Very well. I'm sure Pigeonfall can find a warm place to rest tonight." There was a heavy sound in her voice. She seemed hesitant about finding the missing warrior alive after tonight. Snailpaw couldn't blame her; he thought he'd freeze right there on the spot, so how would Pigeonfall survive a whole night without the warmth of a den?

"WindClan, head back to the camp," she ordered, and her group ended their nosing around. They began to pad through the marshy waters, eager to return to their Clan. Moorstar dipped her head towards Shallowstar before hobbling after them on her short legs.

Once WindClan was out of sight for good, Rowanpool turned to face Shallowstar.

"Do you really think we could find the warrior?" she asked.

"In this cold, I'm not so sure we will." he said.

2. Chapter One

****_Chapter One_****

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><p>Shellpaw slid over a sheet of ice on the ground and stepped up onto a soft bank of wet mud. There was a cluster of clouds hanging low in the sky, threatening the forest with the possibility of snow. The young tomcat felt his fur stand on end and he knew that RiverClan's territory would soon be bearing a white coat.

He turned his head to throw a glance at the clearing a few fox-lengths away. Someone over there the older apprentices were using their battling skills against each other. A pair of dark figures slithered out from hiding spots in the frost-covered bracken before they lunged at each other. The mottled gray tom purred amusingly. He had been an apprentice for a half-moon and his fighting techniques needed a lot more practice before he would be able to do what the others were doing.

But Shellpaw was fine with that.

Suddenly something musty reached his nose. He raised his head, letting the scent reach the glands on the roof of his mouth. Another cat was lurking in the brush not too far from where he was standing. Concentrating, he forced himself to remember what his mentor had told

him about paying attention to his surroundings. He checked the scent again, and this time he caught the whiff of a mouse beneath the roots of a tree, the fish in the stream, and the battling apprentices in the clearing. The stranger's scent was gone.

He cocked his head in confusion. Surely the stranger couldn't have gone far. Just then a flash of brown bounded out of a cluster of bracken a few mouse-lengths away. The attacker gave no warnings and barreled into Shellpaw without second thought. Startled, the apprentice rounded the body of the other clumsily, but was tossed like prey across the ground. He went to get up, but the attacker pinned his shoulders down.

Rolling over, Shellpaw lifted his head. He saw a spotted brown pelt, tufted ears, and a broad body. A pair of yellow eyes met his.

A round muzzle dropped next to the fur on Shellpaw's throat. He heard a growl emit from the deepest parts of a throat before closing his eyes and waiting for the killing bite. When nothing happened, he looked up again and the attacker got off of him.

It was a she-cat, an apprentice around his age. She was purring in amusement, her tail raised high above her head. "I let you smell me and you didn't even know I was there! I got you, Shellpaw! Flintface will be so happy when he finds out I was successful." she exclaimed. "Well, stand up then. Your tail will freeze off if you sit for a long time."

Shellpaw got up, his legs as heavy as tree limbs. He shook dust and sand from his pelt, then moved down to lick his sore shoulders. "Pebblepaw! Do I look like a mouse to you? You've trampled me like I was a piece of prey."

"That was the idea." Pebblepaw flicked the end of her tail. "Flintface told me to practice my hunting skills while he was helping Puddledusk and Rowanpool asses Nightpaw and Snailpaw. If only you had been a mouse. I would've been praised for bringing prey back successfully without the help of a mentor."

"Well, I'm not a mouse." Shellpaw padded over to the other apprentice. "I just wish I could've fought back before you pinned me. That would've been a nice change of events. A younger, smaller apprentice taking on and beating an older one."

"That sounds like an elder's tale; something they'd speak about to the kits in the nursery." Pebblepaw replied. She began to pad off, gesturing for the tom to follow by lashing her tail. "Thank you for being my mouse."

Shellpaw dipped his head. The ground felt cold under his paws and he suddenly could not wait to get back to camp and crawl into his nest. Evening was coming soon, and then he could sleep. Today had been long and boring since his mentor had to stay in due to a small cold. Shellpaw hoped that tomorrow everything would be back to normal.

"Aren't your kin supposed to become apprentices soon?" Pebblepaw asked.

Shellpaw had tried to recall how old his nephews and niece actually

were. Has it really been six moons since they were born? "I think so. I suppose Ashspeck will be happy to get out of the nursery and swing back into action as a warrior."

"I think my mentor's kits are to become apprentices soon, too. Though that won't happen for two more moons. Hopefully I'll be a warrior by then. I'm nearly as old as Nightpaw but younger than Snailpaw. They'll become warriors before Flintface's kits become apprentices. I'm sure of it." Pebblepaw seemed very eager to become a warrior. As she was talking about it, her eyes gleamed.

The sound of the stream just a little ways ahead made Shellpaw flick his ears. He padded over a mossy bank and spotted the strip of water. It was cold, he knew that. Mist rolled on top of it and there were no fish in sight. He went down the bank, walking towards the stones that formed a way across the stream.

Shellpaw hopped on top of the first. He had become very skilled in jumping across the stream, he didn't even have to think about it that much anymore. Pebblepaw was climbing up behind him; he felt her breath against his flank. The young gray tom crouched, wiggled his haunches, and leaped to the next stone. And the next, then the next.

Once he was across he shook the cold, misty droplets from his pelt.

"Hmph!" Pebblepaw landed next to him, her whiskers dripping water. She leaned down in order to groom herself until she was dry. "Brr. . . the water on the rocks was very cold. I'd hate to fall into the stream at this time of the year." she meowed.

"Yeah. Good thing the fish won't be back till Newleaf." said Shellpaw.

On their way back to camp, Shellpaw felt as if the cold air would weigh him down. His pelt didn't feel thick enough, his ears were numb, and the pads of his paws were sticking to the ground. How did any cat get through Leafbare? The warriors didn't seem to be nearly as troubled by this season as Shellpaw did. Even the kits were usually out in the cold to venture around camp.

As they walked beside of the river, Pebblepaw stopped, her whiskers twitching curiously. Her mouth was open as if she had picked up a scent. "Do you smell something? I think I scent WindClan."

"No, I don't." Shellpaw tested the air himself. It was broken and cold, but he didn't smell anything other than the stream and the forest. "Why would a WindClan cat be in RiverClan territory anyways?"

Pebblepaw shook her head. "I don't know, Shellpaw," she meowed. "Something just doesn't seem right. Ah, it's nothing. I think I've been out in the cold too long." She crouched, lashing her tail; she then pelted forward, leaving Shellpaw in the dust. Shellpaw shivered at the gust of air that followed the she-cat's movements. He suddenly felt his legs ache as if he needed to run with Pebblepaw, bounding through the Leafbare forest.

And that he did.

They made it to camp quicker than what it would've taken them if they walked. Shellpaw shook his pelt until it was no longer windswept. "I wonder if Snailpaw and Nightpaw passed their tests." he muttered, panting.

"They probably did. They're really devoted apprentices." Pebblepaw licked her chest. "Especially Snailpaw. He's definitely going to have a good mark with the warriors one day."

"Mmhm. He has very good leadership skills." the tomcat replied. "It wouldn't surprise me if he was made deputy by the time he finishes with his first apprentice."

Pebblepaw nodded and slid through the entrance to the camp.

Shellpaw sat down in front of the entrance, ruffling out his fur. He didn't quite know why he was out here; he was cold and wanted to go nap for a while. But his body remained where it was.

His mind began to linger to what Pebblepaw was talking about earlier. Had she really smelled a WindClan cat? He curled his tail around his paws in thought. His mouth had felt frozen shut back there at the stream, so he didn't want to smell anything. But could Pebblepaw have been right?

Last night Shallowstar had gathered all of the Clan and said one of WindClan's warriors was missing. Every cat over six moons was to search for the lost warrior whenever they found the time. Shallowstar didn't seem too concerned about it, though. Shellpaw wondered if that had been the warrior Pebblepaw smelled.

Suddenly a twig broke in the distance. Shellpaw was up on his paws, alarmed. He heard something faint: a muffled voice followed by light pawsteps padding on the moss. He looked around but saw nothing that seemed dangerous.

He went to settle down, but the voice was there again. Shellpaw whipped his head to the side and saw a dark figure slithering out of the undergrowth.

An unknown cat was standing a few fox-lengths away from him. It was a she-cat, that much he knew. She looked at him, her round blue eyes flickering. Around her neck was a soft-colored collar: a kittypet.

She turned on her paws and disappeared into the undergrowth.

Shellpaw jumped up and ran after her. But as soon as he was close to the ravine, she had already leaped across and ran into the fields towards the Twolegplace. She was gone.

Shaken by the encounter Shellpaw turned around and began to wobble back to camp. He wondered why the kittypet had been so far from her home. Perhaps she had been making her way to ThunderClan and was frightened when she saw him; ThunderClan had a reputation for taking in kittypets.

Shellpaw kept looking over his shoulder, wondering if the kittypet

had returned to the forest. But there was no trace of her again.

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file.